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### "For it is the Number of a Man"

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## "For it is the Number of a Man"

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EDITIONS «ARTOS ZOES»  
ATHENS

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## «FOR IT IS THE NUMBER OF A MAN»

### Some Examples of Ancient Cryptology

The first civilization in recorded history to use what we may refer to, as aspects of *primitive cryptology*,<sup>1</sup> was the Egyptian. The hieroglyphics of early Egypt, which were employed uninterruptedly until about BC 100,<sup>2</sup> contained various figures that were altered from their original form. It would appear that this was done to give the symbols some added distinction. Though this was not a code or cipher it did, nonetheless, *involve a basic principle of cryptology*: namely, "that of transforming writing."<sup>3</sup>

The passing on of religious texts and the description of rituals were the primary reasons for why this form of writing was used. Later, even more changes were made by the scribes under the instructions of the priests, who sought not only to protect these sacred texts but to add deference to their own teachings. When distinctive figures were developed for this purpose, "secrecy, another central form of cryptology, became involved."<sup>4</sup> This was subsequently taken advantage of by the hierocracy who not long after became aware of this great power to holding the keys of translation. However, as F. B. Wrixon notes :

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1. Commentators of the Apoc will generally provide some background information on the 666 puzzle that revolves around the identification system of *gematria*. Few have ventured further to look at the historical evolution of cryptology in general, to which *gematria* belongs. There are varying definitions for *cryptology*, however, the one found in Wrixon, Fred B. *Codes, Ciphers and Secret Languages* (London: Guild Publishing, 1989), is a good working definition: 'Cryptology' (Greek: *kryptos*, hidden + *logos*, word)- The science that includes making messages secret (*cryptography*) and the solving of those messages by those meant to have them (*deciphering* and *decoding*) or by third parties, the "opponents", who are not meant to have them. (p. 5)

2 Budge, E. A. W. *Easy Lessons in Egyptian Hieroglyphics with Sign List*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1899), p. 1.

3. Wrixon, op. cit., p. 15.

4. *ibid.*

...while the Nile's masters had indirectly developed two standard cryptological principles, there are no clear records indicating that they used these methods to conceal diplomatic, commercial, or military gain as a national policy.<sup>5</sup>

The Greeks however, would improve on the art considerably. Herodotus writes that the warning that saved the Greeks against the planned invasion of Xerxes I, was sent by secret means. Demaratus who had heard that Xerxes was on the march sought to send word to the Spartans. By scraping wax from two wooden tablets he created a functional concealment device. Inscribing all that he knew of the Persian's plans, he then replaced the wax covering.<sup>6</sup> These apparently ordinary tablets were delivered untouched to the Spartan command. Once the tablets were safely in Sparta they were studied by a woman named Gorgo, the wife of the Spartan commander Leonidas, "...she has very strong claims to being the world's first female cryptanalyst."<sup>7</sup> The events that followed at the famous battle of Thermopylae are well-known. Herodotus also describes a clever plan by which the heads of slaves were shaved. Secret communications were tattooed [ἔστιζε]<sup>8</sup> on the bald spots. When the hair was restored the shaving process was repeated and the secret communiqué was revealed.<sup>9</sup> Thucydides and Polybius have also documented other concealment methods, including the use of a device called the *skytale*<sup>10</sup> (believed to be the first complete system of transferring secret information) and an encoding device (attributed to Aeneas) which is known as the *elemental transferral*.<sup>11</sup>

We also know that Julius Caesar while building the Roman Empire in Gaul would often communicate with ciphers.<sup>12</sup> The *substitution* type cipher that he employed still bears his name today, the *Caesar cipher*. This was a

5. *ibid.*

6. *Herod.* vii. 239.

7. Wrixon, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

8. "The letters were not written but tattooed [τὸ μὲν ἐστίχθαι κατὰ c. 6 *supra*]. Histiaios may have learnt the art in Thrace" (Macan, Reginald Walter *Herodotus: The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books*, Vol. I and II, New York: Arno Press, 1973, p. 179.

9. *Herod.* v. 35.

10. *Thuc. History* i. 131.

11. For descriptions of the 'skytale' (a method of transposition) and the 'elemental transferral' (a signalling apparatus combining the physical elements), see Wrixon, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

12. Suetonius has described this very well for us, "[t]hen there are his letters to Cicero; and his private letters to friends, *the more confidential passages of which he*

*monoalphabetic* substitution with direct standard alphabets. For example, Julius Caesar used the setting in which plain text A was enciphered as D, while Augustus Caesar used that in which plain text A was enciphered as B.<sup>13</sup> This was not *hidden* but as J. A. Bielewicz says, "it was true secret writing or *cryptography*."<sup>14</sup> The question begs to be asked: Was the Seer of Patmos familiar with Caesar's cipher? We cannot answer with any degree of certainty. But if he was, the use of his own 'cipher' to hide the name of the imperial beast, extends the application of the conundrum even further—to parody and cynicism.

### *Examples from the Old Testament*

In the OT four clear examples of genuine cryptology are those found in the Book of Jeremiah (25:26, 51:1, 51:41) and that in the Book of Daniel (5:25). As William Taylor Smith notes, these are "...examples of a cryptic or cipher mode of writing which come[s] very near the riddle."<sup>15</sup> SHê SHaKH, in Jer 25:26 and 51:14, represented by the three letters *shîn, shîn, kaph*, are meant to be read with the substitution *for each letter of the letter* as near the beginning of the alphabet as it is near the end. The intended reading therefore is supposed to be *sh = b, sh = b, k = l*, that is, *Bbl* or *Babel*, the prophet here obviously referring to Babylon. Similarly, in Jer 51:1, the five consonants composing the word *Lebkamai: l, b, k, m, y*, suggest *k, s, d, y, m*, that is, *Kasdim* or *Chaldees*.

The Daniel piece is the more well known of these very interesting passages, but it differs from the Jeremiah ciphers in that it does not involve the use of *substitution*. It is rather, as Joyce G. Baldwin and others say, *word-play*.<sup>16</sup> During King Belshazzar's "great feast for a thousand of his lords" (Dan 5:1), and in the midst of all the revelry came a dire prediction of doom. This came in the form "of a man's hand [that] appeared and wrote

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*wrote in cypher*: to understand their apparently incomprehensible meaning one must number the letter of the alphabet from 1 to 22, and then replace each of the letters that Caesar has used with the one which occurs four numbers lower- for instance, D stands for A" (Suet., *Caes.* 56). [italics mine]

13. For the origins of secret intelligence in the Roman Empire, see Francis Dvornik, *Origins of Intelligence: The Ancient Near East, Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, The Mongol Empire, China, Muscovy*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1974), pp. 48-121.

14. Bielewicz, Julian A. *Secret Language: Communicating in Codes and Ciphers* (London: Jupiter Books, 1976), p. 6.

15. "Games" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* vol. II, art., William Taylor Smith, p. 1171

16. Baldwin, Joyce G. *Daniel* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p. 123.

on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace" (5:5). Daniel owing to his reputation "to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems" (5:12) was summoned to the palace to "show the interpretation." The cryptic<sup>17</sup> words that were inscribed on the wall were: *MENE, MENE, TEKEL*, and *PARSIN* (with the conjunction written *Upharsin*). John J. Collins argues that the story retains some of the *basic character of the folk tale*:

The story of the mysterious writing on the wall retains some of the basic character of the folk tale, a traditional narrative set in the mysterious world of fantasy. As in chap. 2, the plot reflects the pattern of the tale of court contest: (i) The king is confronted with mysterious signs, (ii) The wise men fail to understand, (iii) Daniel succeeds where they fail, (iv) Daniel is exalted to high rank. The mysterious signs constitute a riddle, a favourite test of wisdom in ancient court tales- compare 1 Kgs 10:1, where the queen of Sheba came to test Solomon with riddles, and Ahikar's encounter with the king of Egypt. It is of the essence of a riddle that it is difficult to resolve, and interest is focused on the drama of interpretation. There can be no real doubt that any form of this story that culminated in the mysterious writing included the motif of the test of wisdom.<sup>18</sup>

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Baldwin writes, "[t]he three terms, *Mene*, *Tekel* and *Parsin* were meaningful to readers of Hebrew and Aramaic and did not represent some strange tongue, as they do for most modern readers. For the king the difficulty was not to give the 'dictionary definition' of the terms, but to see what significance they had for him. It is nevertheless a fact that scholars have had the added task of identifying the words and their original connotation. *This is not made easier by the oriental love of word-play, so that one cryptogram can convey a world of meaning*" [italics mine] (ibid., p. 123); see also Anderson, Robert A. *Daniel: Signs and Wonders* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), p. 62. "Throughout the interpretation the author has Daniel engage in *paronomasia*, a frequently used verbal device in the prophetic literature (e.g. Amos 8:1, 2 and Jer. 1:11, 12)."

17. "From a cryptological point of view these words were not particularly secretive in a strictly linguistic sense. In fact, it can be argued that transformation in a literal sense was absent. Yet this only heightens our fascination with the account" (Wrixon, op. cit., p. 17).

18. Collins, John J. *Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 253f.

## The Famous 666 Cryptogram of the Seer of Patmos

Ever since the Seer of Patmos put down his own famous cryptogram on the number of the beast, it has continued to exercise throughout the centuries and in equal degree, popular imagination, cloistered piety, and scholarship.<sup>19</sup> From classical antiquity its intrigue and fame can only be considered against that held by the riddle of the Sphinx.<sup>20</sup> The 13th chapter of the Apocalypse, which speaks of the two infamous beasts, introduces the puzzle:

Ὡςδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν. ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου, ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν, καὶ ἀριθμὸς αὐτοῦ ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ. (13:18)

### To Count or to Calculate

One of the key words here is ψηφισάτω,<sup>21</sup> generally rendered *count* (ASV) or *calculate* (NRSV) by most of the English versions. However, the RSV prefers *reckon*.<sup>22</sup> A more precise translation of the Greek, and the one that this present writer favours, is to *count*.<sup>23</sup> It is probably for this reason

19. This has been abundantly documented in Bernard McGinn's, Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil (San Francisco: Harper, 1994). The study (a socio-historical review) takes the Antichrist legend "seriously but not literally" (p. 2).

20. In Greek mythology the Sphinx (the daughter of Typhon), sat before one of the gates of Thebes and killed every passerby who could not solve the riddle she posed: "What goes first on four, then on two, and finally on three legs?" When Oedipus solved the riddle, the Sphinx plunged into an abyss and Thebes was liberated from her death grip. [The answer was *man*]. (See The Chiron Dictionary of Greek & Roman Mythology, trans. 1993, p. 273.)

21. ψηφίζω 1 aor. ἐψηφισα (Aeschyl., Hdt.+; inscr., pap.; 3 Km 3:8 v.l.; 8:5 v.l.; Philo; Jos., Ant. 17, 43 al.; Sib. Or. 13, 47) *count (up)*, *calculate*, *reckon* (lit. 'w. pebbles') (Zen.-P. Cairo III [28] 59328, 111 [248 BC]; Palaeoph. 53 [AWestermann, Mythographi 1843 p. 311, 24] τὰς περιόδους τῶν ἡμερῶν Plut.) τὴν δαπάνην Lk 14:28. τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου Rv 13:18. See χξς' and ἀριθμὸς 1. M-M.\* Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

22. The KJV also translates *count*. The NASB, NIV, and NKJV, all prefer 'calculate the number'.

23. Preferred also by the RSV *Interlinear*, 3rd edn.



that E. W. Bullinger distinguishes between *enumeration* and *computation*.<sup>24</sup> "Whatever the solution the way to reach it" as Robert L. Thomas well underscores, "is by counting."<sup>25</sup> In the NT two other instances of arithmetical computation, *in the sense of calculate*,<sup>26</sup> are found. These are the reference in Lk 14:28, "and count [ψηφίζει] the cost" and the other in Acts 19:19, "and they counted [συνεψήφισαν] the value of them." This is very important, for it would make it unlikely that what we have here is simply a case of broad symbolism. R. L. Thomas and others, including 'Ι. Γιαννακόπουλος, Gerhard A. Krodel and Charles T. Chapman, argue that we cannot connect to the Apoc's words a general meaning involving no *arithmetic complexities*:

It [symbolic interpretation] ignores the command to 'count,' and it overlooks the writer's intention that the number be understood well enough to identify an individual from it. General numerical symbolism cannot yield the identity of a specific person.<sup>27</sup>

*For it is the Number of a Man*

Secondly, and what is most important, we have to deal with both the proper rendering, and the probable meaning of, ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν. The English Versions generally agree in their translation but with one all significant difference in nuance, which I shall discuss in a moment after I present the renderings:

- (KJV)        *for it is the number of a man*
- (NKJV)      *for it is the number of a man*<sup>28</sup>
- (1901 ASV) *for it is the number of a man*
- (RSV)        *for it is a human number*
- (NRSV)      *for it is the number of a person*
- (NASB)      *for the number is that of a man*
- (NIV)        *for it is a man's number*

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24. Bullinger, E. W. Commentary on Revelation (Kregel Publications: Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 439f. Bullinger's further comments are worthy of note, "[t]he words [of 13:18] imply that the calculation is possible but difficult" (ibid.).

25. Thomas, Robert L. Revelation vol II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), p. 183.

26. "Count" in ISBE vol. II, art., H. E. Jacobs, p. 723.

27. Thomas, op. cit. (Thomas closely follows Henry Alford).

28. The New King James Version (NKJV) was the preferred English Version (EV) of the Saint Athanasius Orthodox Academy in their preparation of The Orthodox Study Bible (1993).

All the translations could allow for the understanding that the number could properly belong to one specific and defined individual. The rendering of the *RSV* however, though not excluding such an interpretation, definitely discourages it. By preferring 'human' instead of 'man' the emphasis is taken away from a specific person and the number is applied to humankind in general, and so denoting more of a general symbol of apostasy rather than the number of that man who will head that apostasy.

There are two other modern translations whose witness must be considered before the examination of the Greek text itself. One is the interpretation of the esteemed Greek Orthodox theologian and formerly professor at the School of Theology, Athens University, Π.Ν. Τρεμπέλας (1886-1977). In his parallel commentary to the Greek NT text, Ἡ Καινή Διαθήκη: Μετά Συντόμου Ἑρμηνείας (1952), he states two very significant things, and these clearly. First, that the number so signified is that of the Antichrist, who is the beast; and secondly, that the number itself, is the number of this antichrist, the number of a man [meaning the antichrist] and not of some other supernatural or superhuman person. More fully on Rev 13:18 Π.Ν. Τρεμπέλας writes, and who incidentally, here understands ψηφισάτω in the sense of a mathematical computation:

Ἐδῶ εἶναι ἡ θεία σοφία καί κρυμμένη ἀπὸ τοὺς μακρὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀνθρώπους. "Οποῖος ἔχει νοῦν φωτισμένον, ἅς ρυθμίση τοὺς ἀριθμούς, πού κάθε γράμμα τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου σημαίνει, καί ἅς ἀθροίσῃ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου. Διότι δὲν εἶναι ἀριθμὸς ὀνόματος ὑπερανθρώπου καί ὑπερφυσικοῦ προσώπου, ἀλλ' ἀριθμὸς ὀνόματος ἀνθρώπου. Καί ὁ ἀριθμὸς, πού βγαίνει ἀπὸ τὸ ἄθροισμα τῆς ἀριθμητικῆς ἀξίας ἐνός ἐκάστου γράμματος τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ θηρίου, εἶναι ἐξαχόσια ἐξήκοντα ἕξ ἢ χξς' = ὄνομα πού ἀντιτίθεται καί πλαστογραφεῖ τὸ ὄνομα Χριστός.<sup>29</sup>

The second Modern Greek version witness is that provided by the

29. Τρεμπέλας, Π. Ν. Ἡ Καινή Διαθήκη: Μετά Συντόμου Ἑρμηνείας, (1952), p. 1033.

translation of the ancient Greek text into the contemporary Greek language and idiom by six other Greek Orthodox NT scholars (and specialists in NT hermeneutics), from the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. Their work, Η Καινή Διαθήκη: Το πρωτότυπο κείμενο με νεοελληνική δημοτική μετάφραση (1985), unlike that of Τρεμπέλας is not a running commentary of the text, so there is not so much strict exegesis here as there is an attempt for a faithful rendering of the ancient text into the Modern Greek vernacular. For ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν they have "which [the number] denotes a person." The translators also use λογαριάσει for ψηφισάτω which literally means to 'add up' or to 'work out'. In full the translation reads as follows:

Εδώ χρειάζεται η σοφία. Όποιος έχει μυαλό ας λογαριάσει τον αριθμό του θηρίου, που δηλώνει έναν άνθρωπο· ο αριθμός του είναι εξακόσια εξήντα έξι.<sup>30</sup>

The ancient text itself, may seem unclear on what the original intent of the author was, but on examination a probable meaning comes to the surface. To begin with, the conjunction γὰρ (for), points to the reason why this calculation/reckoning should be made: because it is the *number of a man*. The confusion that has reigned behind the rendering of ἀριθμὸς [γὰρ] ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν, has been briefly but well explained by Robert L. Thomas. It is because, "[i]t is the number of man:"

*has two possible meanings.* It can mean that it is a humanly intelligible number or that it is the number of a certain individual. The former possibility takes ἀνθρώπου (human) as an adjectival genitive to mean that the number is easily understandable by anyone with a fair measure of wisdom. This same word, ἀνθρώπου, has this meaning in Rev 21:17 in speaking of 'a human measure.' Yet it is not valid to use 21:17 as a criterion, because in that verse an angel is the measurer, creating the need for the sense of 'a humanly understood measure.' To say something is humanly understood here is pointless. *It raises the unanswerable question, what is a nonhuman number?* The inescapable conclusion is that the expression means this is a mysterious hint

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30. Ἀγουρίδης, Σ. et al., Η Καινή Διαθήκη: Το πρωτότυπο κείμενο με νεοελληνική δημοτική μετάφραση (1985), p. 501.

about a man whose name gives the number 666.<sup>31</sup>

*This Calls for Wisdom: let him who has understanding (Rev 13:18)*

Despite all the apparent complexities that are bound up with the mystery of the number, the author of Revelation does provide a way for the reader to solve the puzzle. However, two things are required: the first is "wisdom" [σοφία],<sup>32</sup> and the second is "understanding" [νοῦν]<sup>33</sup> (Rev 13:18). By wisdom the Seer means that "understanding and skill necessary to solve the problem of the number."<sup>34</sup> But it would be a mistake to limit this wisdom to simply the perceptiveness of an individual, it also means, Π. Ἰ. Μπρατσιώτης, correctly underscores, the wisdom of God that He allows to work within the members of the Church as a spiritual gift, "...νοῦς δέ νοεῖται ἐνταῦθα τό θεῖον, τό πνευματικόν χάρισμα..."<sup>35</sup> In simple terms, as John G. Strelan puts it, "[w]isdom, not smartness... [i]t is a wisdom born of faith in Christ, the Lamb who was slain."<sup>36</sup> The "understanding" is that distinct intelligence of the believers which allows them to see through the treachery and deception of both the imperial beasts. As the context makes clear, this wisdom and understanding are to be found only in the Christian communities that the Seer is addressing, and not outside this community to "anyone with intelligence" as G. B. Caird appears to suggest.<sup>37</sup> There is an important difference. For if these insights

31. Thomas, op. cit., vol. II, p. 184.

32. Proverbs teaches, "Does not wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice?" (Prov 8:1); The prophet Isaiah writes, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding" will rest on God's chosen (Isa 11:2); "understanding and wisdom" are found in Daniel (Dan 5:11); God gives "wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding" (2:21); Hosea says "Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them" (Hos 14:9).

33. "The special intelligence" writes Thomas, "to be given believers alive during the days of the false Christ's reign" (op. cit., vol. II, p. 183); Σ. Ἀγουρίδης et al. translate, "Ὅποιος ἔχει μυαλό..." (op. cit., p. 501). That is, *common sense*. [lit. a brain]

34. Thomas, op. cit., vol. II, p. 182.

35. Μπρατσιώτης, Π. Ἰ. Ἡ Ἀποκάλυψις τοῦ Ἰωάννου (Ἀθήνα: Δέσποινα Μαυρομάτη, 1992), p. 217.

36. Strelan, John G. Where Earth Meets Heaven: A Commentary On Revelation (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1994), p. 227.

37. Caird, G. B. The Revelation of Saint John (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1966), p. 174.

were unique to the faithful of the primitive Church, or more specifically to a select few who possessed this "wisdom" and "intelligence", then the identity of the 'true' beast may not have been so self-evident as some commentators might assume.<sup>38</sup> That these terms are to be understood with the context of the puzzle is further proven by the parallel in Daniel in the background to his visions (Dan 9:22).

Scholars of the Apocalypse agree that "no other problem in Revelation has given rise to so many speculations as that of the meaning of this number [666]."<sup>39</sup> However, this has not deterred interpreters, of all persuasions, from *seeking its authentic meaning*.<sup>40</sup> M. Eugene Boring has written accurately on this problem:

The passage is important, and its misuse by calendarizers and religious hobbyists who regard the number 666 as something of a religious crossword puzzle should not deter more serious interpreters...<sup>41</sup>

### **Dominant Interpretations: Who is 666<sup>42</sup>**

Serious interpreters may differ as to their conclusions but they will generally "identify [a] system of coding and interpretation used by the author"<sup>43</sup> and then proceed to their analysis and exegesis of the text. Jürgen Roloff has correctly described the three most dominant interpretations: (i) *Interpretation as gematria*, (ii) *Symbolic-theological interpretation*, (iii) *Arithmetic Interpretation*.<sup>44</sup> To these three approaches should be added, given the indisputable Danielic influence to be found in the Apocalypse (and specifically in reference to Dan 5:25), the *Riddle*.<sup>45</sup> For it fulfills the basic criterion required by Rev 13:18, that is, concealment (from the

38. *ibid.*

39. Roloff, Jürgen *Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 165; similarly Prévost, Jean-Pierre "[n]ow we have to deal with the best-known number in the Apocalypse (666), and beyond doubt also the one that has been abused the most" (*How to Read the Apocalypse* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1993), p. 35).

40. Boring, M. Eugene *Revelation* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1989), p. 161.

41. *ibid.*

42. For an exhaustive review and analysis of the dominant interpretations, see M. G. Michael, *The Number of the Beast, 666, (Revelation 13:16-18): Background, Sources, and Interpretation*, (Thesis submitted to Macquarie University, NSW, Australia, 1998), pp. 244-277.

43. Roloff, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

44. *op. cit.*, pp. 165-167.

45. Riddles (Heb *hîdhâh*, Gk *αἰνίγμα* were comparatively common in the

unworthy) and divulgement (to the elect) in the form of "deciphering" or "decoding".

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ancient East. A tablet in the British museum (K 4347: *Guide to Assy and Bab Antiquities*<sup>2</sup>, 53) from the library of Ashur-bani-pal evidences the use of riddles not only by the Assyrians of the 7th cent. BC, but also in a far earlier age, for it contains a Sumer as well as Sem text. So it is not surprising that we find a remarkable example in early Israelitish history (cf. *ISBE* vol. II, p. 1170). The example that William Taylor Smith refers to is *Samson's famous riddle* in the Book of Judges, "And he said to them, 'Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.' And they could not in three days tell what the riddle was." (Jgs 14:14) The Queen of Sheba came to "test" Solomon with "hard questions." The word used of Samson's riddle *hidhâh* is also the one used for the queen's hard questions (1 Kings 10:1, 2 Chr 9:1). Also the LXX renders the word *αἰνίγμασιν*, the Gk for riddle. Josephus writes of Solomon's great wisdom in the solving of all kinds of enigmas, "Moreover, the King of Tyre sent sophisms and enigmatical sayings to Solomon, and desired he would solve them, and free them from the ambiguity that was in them. Now so sagacious and understanding was Solomon, that none of these problems were too hard for him; but he conquered them all by his reasonings, and discovered their hidden meaning, and brought it to light" (*Ant.*, viii, 5, 3). Prizes or penalties were sometimes associated with the solving of a riddle (Jgs 14:19, *Ant.*, *ibid.*). It has been suggested by Oort in Cheyne's *Job and Solomon*, p. 127, that some of the proverbs were originally current among the people as riddles (cit., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iv, p. 270). James L. Crenshaw, speaks of the disintegrated riddles that "seem to exist throughout the book of Proverbs and Song of Songs" (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol 5, p. 722.) Visible examples being Prov 5:15-16 and Cant 4:12. In the deuterocanonical Book of Ecclesiasticus, we encounter a number of the so-called 'numerical riddles', for example 23:16, 25:1f, 26:5f. But these are not so much riddles for their purpose is to disclose an apophthegm rather than to hide it or tease for an answer. In the NT the word *riddle* is used only once, by Saint Paul [*ἐν αἰνίγματι*], trans. RSV as *dimly*, referring to how we see things in this age as opposed to the direct vision of the spiritual realities in the age to come (1 Cor. 13:12).